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## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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# THE NATURE OF LIBERTY.

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"Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."—JOHN xv. 15.

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This is unquestionably a contrast between an enforced and a free religious condition. It is a transfer from a life compelled by fear, through conscience, to a life that is inspired and made spontaneous by love. The strength of the phrase does not come out in that term *servant*. It is *slave* in the original. To be sure, the condition represented by the term *slave* was not at that time marked so sharply by the contrast of its misery with surrounding circumstances, as it is in our own day; nevertheless, it was a condition to be deprecated; and throughout the Scripture it is spoken of both as a misfortune and a disgrace. Our Saviour looked upon his disciples as if they had, as Jews, and as worshipers after the manner of their fathers, been tied up in a kind of bondage. He was a member of the Jewish commonwealth, and was of the Jewish church; he had never separated himself from any of its ordinances or observances, but was walking as the fathers walked; and his disciples were bound not only to the Mosaic ritual, but to him as a kind of Rabbi; as a reform teacher, but nevertheless a teacher under the Jewish scheme. And so they were servants—slaves; they were rendering an enforced obedience. But he said to them, "Henceforth I shall not call you my servants—persons obeying me, as it were, from compulsion, from a sense of duty, from the stress of a rigorous conscience; I shall now call you *friends*." And he gives the reason why. A servant is one who receives orders, and is not admitted to conference. He does not know about his lord's affairs. His lord thinks first about his own affairs, and when he has consummated his plans, he gives his directions; so that all the servant has to do is to obey. But a friend sits in counsel with his friend, and bears a part in that friend's thinking and feeling, and in the

determinations to which he comes; and Christ said to his disciples, "You come into partnership with me hereafter, and you stand as friends, on a kind of equality with me. There is to be liberty between you and me hereafter."

Christ, then, raised men from religion as a bondage to religion as a freedom. I do not like the word *religion*; but we have nothing else to take its place. It signifies, in the original, to *bind*, to *tie*. Men were bound. They were under obligations, and were tied up by them. Christianity is something more than religion—that is, religion interpreted in its etymological sense, and as it is popularly esteemed. Christianity is religion developed into its last form, and carries men from necessity to voluntariness—from bondage to emancipation. It is a condition of the highest and most normal mental state, and is ordinarily spontaneous and free. This is not an accidental phrase. In the eighth chapter of John we shall find our Master speaking in this wise, to the disputing Jews and Pharisees of the temple:

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant [slave] of sin. And the servant [slave] abideth not in the house forever; but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free [emancipate you], ye shall be free indeed."

They were talking about an external civil condition, and he was talking of an interior, psychologic, spiritual condition; but the thought is precisely the same in either case—namely, that if you become adherents of the Son and heir, who has power, you with him shall inherit his liberty.

The apostle Paul speaks often of this matter. In the second chapter of Corinthians, he says: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." In the eighth chapter of Romans he speaks of the "glorious liberty" into which "the children of God" shall be brought.

And the law of liberty is familiar to the mouth of James. I need not go into a citation of the numerous passages which are employed in the Epistles, to show how much that idea rested on the minds of the apostles, and how emphatic and important it was in their ministration—the idea, namely, that Christians had come to liberty.

They were cautioned against a misunderstanding of it. It was not liberty to do what they had a mind to, that was meant. It was not liberty to run into licentiousness. It was not to be a cloak for misdeeds of every kind. It was not *antinomianism*, as it

is called in modern phrase. Yet they were free men. Their bondage was broken. Their yokes were taken off. The doors of their prison-house were opened. Their hands were loosed. They were brought into freedom. They were established in a new relation. They had a new life. A more glorious joy streamed from their experience. And it was all around the center of liberty.

Has Christianity in our own time this aspect? When you look over the whole body of Christian churches, and sects, and denominations, is it the first impression on the minds of Christians that they are brought into this noble condition of liberty? I know that it is not. I know that men enter upon the Christian life as upon a life of onerous duty. The common phrase is, that they are to "take up their cross, and follow Christ." They enlist in religion, as soldiers, hard pressed for a livelihood, enlist in the army, as the least of two evils. Men do not want to be lost; they do not want to be under condemnation all the time; they would be glad to have a spiritual life-insurance policy; they are willing to comply with the conditions as far as they can; and they get under the shelter of the church in order to be safe. But when men are once sheltered in the church, what is the popular impression in regard to their condition? What is the feeling, ordinarily, among church-members, taking one church with another, up and down through the land? Is it that religion brings to men release, or larger liberty than they had before? On the contrary, is it not that they are put upon a course of more narrowly watching their conduct, and that therefore they are circumscribed in their freedom? Is it not that they are restrained on the right and on the left? Do not men, when they become Christians, oftentimes become precisionists? And do not their companions and acquaintances say of them, "What side boughs these men used to have! How their branches used to hang down to the ground, and give them grace and beauty! But now they have been trimmed up, and are long-legged trees. Perhaps at the top there is something that is worth having; but all that which made them agreeable and companionable has been cut away." Is it not the impression that a glorious good fellow is spoiled when he goes into the church? Is it not often said of a man, when he has become a church-member, "He used to be free-hearted and open-handed, and ready for social life; but now he mopes, and keeps on a long face, and is all the time thinking of Sundays, and Bibles, and such things as those. He is not by any means the man that he was. I do not enjoy him half so much as I used to when he did not pretend to be religious?" Is there not such a feeling as this current in the community?

Is this the fulfilment of the promise? Is it that which Christ promised—freedom? Is it that which the apostle rejoiced in—liberty? Is it that which men are taught that they are to have by reason of being sons of God—heirship? Are not men, when they become Christians, yoked and harnessed? Are they not all the while tugging in the traces on the path of duty? Are they not continually doing things because they feel that they *ought to*? Is Sunday to them a glorious day of liberty? Is the Bible, as they look upon it, a portal which opens the temple of liberty? Do they regard prayer as a blessed prerogative of liberty? Is your life, Christian, every day infolded in a large, clear, singing liberty? Do your children look upon you as being better, happier, richer, in every way more a man than others who are not Christians? Is that the impression which is entertained about you by your neighbors? Is it the idea of men, when they look upon the church, that it is a place of more ample freedom? Do men, when they go into the church feel, "I have lived in this little hut of sin long enough, and I am going to move out of it into the palace of righteousness;" or do they feel, "I have lived in the mansion of sin as long as it is safe, and now I am going into the little hut of righteousness?" They say, "I am going to become a Christian, and in becoming a Christian I shall enter into a state of limitation and circumscription, but I am willing to suffer a little for the sake of insuring my eternal salvation. I am willing to go into the church a little while, for the sake of going to heaven by-and-by, and dwelling there forever and ever."

What is the popular impression of religion? It is that it is a necessary evil. It is that it results in many cases in that which is good, but that, in the main, men insure their souls much as they do their houses. They do not want to pay out their money, but they would rather do that than have their houses burned up, and get nothing for them.

Now, what is the nature of liberty? We shall throw some light, I think, upon the thoughts and practices of men, if we can come to an understanding of the root of this matter. What is your idea of liberty? Do you regard it as an exemption from bondage where a man exercises authority over you without having any right to do it? Do you understand that it is a special kind of liberty, as where one is set free from obedience to an intrusive government or a foreign power, by legislation or by an appeal to armed force? We know what it is to be liberated from such bondage. But what is liberty in its most comprehensive sense, as applied to the universal human family? Is it doing just what you

please? Well, yes, when you please to do everything right, but never otherwise. When you please upward, the law is liberty; when you please downward, it is bondage.

What, then, is liberty? It is the condition of men who understand the laws which surround them and govern them completely and surely, and who submit to those laws. It is the condition of submission and obedience to all the laws which God has laid upon men. You cannot make anything else out of it. It is submission with cheerful spontaneity in regard to God's primary constituent laws in society and in the material world. A man who knows what these laws are, and respects them, and heartily and fully obeys them, is free; and every time a man, from ignorance or indisposition, fails to obey one of these laws, he becomes a slave of that law. No man is free who does not ride laws. No man is free whom laws ride. The fundamental idea of liberty is not that of throwing off law—although we have derived that impression from oppressive physical laws. In a general sense, liberty means finding out and obeying laws. God's constitution of men and life is, that they receive their largest expansion in certain ways, and that these ways are marked out by divine laws; and he is freest who knows them most perfectly, accepts them most cheerfully, and gives to them the most plenary obedience. Nobody is free who does not know them, or who, knowing them, refuses to obey them.

Take physical laws, for example. Who is the free workman? It is the man that has learned the perfect use of his members, and the nature of the material which he has in hand, whether it be wood, or stone, or iron, or leather, so that he instinctively deals with each according to the laws which govern it, and employs his tools and implements according to their laws. The manipulation is not a thing of volition. He has learned it. It has worked into his unconscious condition. It is an involuntary action. And, looking at him as he works, we say, "What a facile worker!" When he begins to saw a scroll, how he saws with all his body—his legs, and arms, and every other part! How the saw wanders from the line! How hard it is for him to do the work! But by-and-by, when, after having compelled his muscles to submit to the law of the muscles, he takes the saw, it runs round and round, and you can scarcely follow it with your eye, so glibly does it run, and so deftly does he handle it.

Take the act of fencing. Look at the bungling boy who takes the rapier and squares himself off in an ungainly manner, and holds up his awkward hand, and tries to parry the blow, and see how, as quick as a flash, his sword flies into the air. On the other

hand, look at the master. See how naturally, and gracefully, and easily the rapier moves, as upon an axis. It is no labor for him to handle it. He does it without any trouble—he does not do it; it does itself. And how did he come to this dexterity? By subduing himself to the laws that are involved in that action. When he became thoroughly obedient to natural law, when he, as it were, enslaved himself to that law, he found perfect liberty—perfect facility.

Suppose a man should say, “I won’t walk according to the way in which my muscles were made to work: my muscles have got to work in another way?” The moment his muscles do work in another way, he is in the hospital. There is no liberty in the unnatural use of the muscles. He that would walk, must walk according to the laws of walking which were born in him. He that would work, must work according to the laws that are wrapped up under his skin. It is submission to laws, it is facility of obedience to them, it is the habit of obeying them, wrought into spontaneity, that gives a man liberty, and power, and worth. And out of liberty come fruit and prosperity.

The same is true in respect to study. He that would study can invent no new ways. He has to use his faculties as they were made to be used. He has to have some knowledge of his construction, and of the method of acquiring knowledge, and then there must be a ready acceptance of this method and a following it out. This runs through the whole nature of men. As modern philosophy has shown that the whole stellar universe is a unit of the same general structure and of the same general laws, so it may be said that there is a corresponding unit in the minds of men; that the whole of human life is a unit; that that which is common to the body and the lower forms of mind is true of the moral sentiments. As men are educated in intellectual matters, in mathematics, in arithmetic, in all physical subjects, by drill, by certain methods of development, so it is with conscience, and faith, and hope, and love. So it is with all that which we call the development of religious experience. The moral sentiments are subject to precisely the same laws of education that all the rest of the faculties of the human soul are. And in proportion as a man knows the laws that relate to his whole being, and accepts them, and becomes facile in obedience to them, in that proportion he opens himself up in a large sphere, and becomes a child, not of restriction, and not of doing that which he ought to do, but a child of liberty.

In the next place, we see why it is that in the New Testament certain symbols are employed, and that there is a seeming contra-

diction between them. On the one hand, religion is called a "glorious light and liberty." On the other hand, we hear the Saviour saying, "Except a man shall take up his cross daily and follow me, he is not worthy of me, and shall not enter into the kingdom of God. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Nevertheless it is a yoke, and it is a burden; and how is this to be reconciled with the "light and liberty of the sons of God?" Why, there is not a boy in school that cannot tell you how it is.

When I first began to study algebra, if there was anything more nebulous—no, more absolutely dark—than those abstract algebraic signs, I should like to know what it was. The study was dry; but I moistened it with my tears! I had spurs and motives of other sorts to help me; but in the beginning, if there ever was a prison, if there ever were chains, if any man was ever bent under a despotic lash, I was in prison, I wore chains, and I was bent under a despotic lash, when I began algebra. But after a few weeks I saw a little light; and after a few months I began to understand the subject.

You talk about being "born again." No man ever becomes a scholar who is not born again. There is a time when it flashes on the young mind that it has power to cope with difficulty, and of its own self to overcome obstacles. The moment when a boy or a girl feels, "I can subdue these difficulties," the intellect of that boy or girl is born again; and from that time the way is comparatively easy.

I remember the glorious hour when I was delivered from the bondage of *I can't*, and born into the glorious liberty of *I can*, and it has never left me since. That was a conversion which stood without backsliding. And after six months I became very vain of my algebraic skill, so that I longed, when the examination came, to have the hardest problems given to me. But I remember that when the questions were given out, one of the easiest—I have forgotten what it was—came to me, and I wanted to cry. The problem of "the couriers" was the hardest, and I wanted it, but it did not come to me. I remember envying the boy that had "the couriers." In the beginning, the study of algebra was a bondage to me; but after the fight was over it was a liberty. Then I was the master. When I started, algebra was my master, and it rode me like a nightmare; but when I ended, I had it under my feet. It had to do what I wanted it should, then.

How is it in respect to the department of music? When Ru-

binstein first began to play, he played with awkward, hesitating movements, thinking of each separate note as he struck the keys. There was a great sweating time between the beginning and that period in which his hand was subdued to his musical will, so that the instrument was at his command, and he walked the high places of the earth, and outsang the birds, yea, and was friend to the mighty sounds of thunder and of storm. All this skill came to him through bondage—that, is practice—hard work. Out of work comes leisure, and out of bondage liberty. He that wants to be free must subdue bondage to get his freedom.

Therefore it is that when men first enter upon a Christian life, they enter upon it as a man enters upon an apprenticeship to a carpenter, or tinner, or shipmaster, or anybody else. When you are first converted, nothing takes place more than just to apprentice you to Christ. After a while you hear the Master saying to you, "Henceforth I call you not an apprentice, not a servant, but a friend." When you have learned certain elements of Christianity so that you manifest freely the Christian traits, and feel spontaneously the love of Christ, the Master says to you, "You are my friend."

When you begin the Christian life, it must be that you begin by taking up the cross; but you need not hunt for it. A great many persons think that they must do some special thing which is called "taking up the cross." In the family and in the church, the father and mother have been praying for the conversion of their children; and here is a high-headed, broad-browed girl that has come into a state of seriousness. She has been trained from her cradle to all Christian virtues and ethics, and she has sought, as long as she can remember, to act in accordance with such training. Her ideal has, for a great while, been to be a Christian woman, and now a serious feeling has come over her. As her father and mother have always been praying for her conversion, she feels that she ought to do something; but what to do she does not know. She wants to submit; but there is nothing that she can think of in which she has not already submitted. "Well, submit your heart." "I am willing to submit my heart if I only knew what that meant." "Well, lay down the weapons of your rebellion." "I never had any weapons of rebellion that I know of." "Well, you must be born again." She is more perplexed at that than Nicodemus was; and she comes into a state of turmoil. The fact is, that child has been brought up in a Christian way from her very infancy. She took up her cross when she was three years old. When she was five years old, the yoke and the burden were on her little neck, and

she has never known a time when they were not there. She has been harnessed by Christian parents ever since she was born. And at last she has come to the point where all that she wants is a little more illumination as to the beauty of Christ. Her very life has been a preparation for this momentary transition. And the idea that she must make believe that she is a heathen, and go through all the struggles that a heathen would need to go through to become a Christian, is monstrous. I am amazed that there should be such ignorance at this day.

I repeat, that men need not go about looking for a cross to take up when they are going to be Christians. Here is Christ's character, and here are Christ's commands: are you willing to conform to them? If you say that you are, and you make up your mind that you will, and you begin to do it, you are a Christian. You will find crosses enough to take up without seeking for them. If, when you go home, your servant is mad and saucy, and spits words in your face, as it were, and you are as mad as he is, and are willing to be as mean as he is, then there is your cross, and you must take it up, and you must serve an apprenticeship in bearing it until you can be reviled and not *feel like* reviling again. When the time comes that your servant is saucy, and you are equable, then there will be no cross for you in that direction.

What is the cross? Is it something that has been adopted as a token of slavery? Is it something that is suffered before one comes into a Christian life? Suffer just as much as it is necessary for you to suffer in order to be good and true. If you do not need to suffer to become so, then do not suffer. If you are naturally skillful of hand when you enter upon an apprenticeship, you do not need to go through the regular bungling stages that one who is unskillful of hand needs to go through. You have a right to all that you have in you. And where one has been living purely from the cradle, the change to a Christian tendency and disposition is very slight; but where one has been living in such a state that he is under the dominion of a violent temper, then the transition to a Christian life is very marked—the change is abrupt. When a man begins to follow Christ, he must strive as much, he must suffer as much pain, he must take up as much cross, and he must carry as much burden, as is necessary to enable him to follow Christ with ease and facility—that is all. When he has reached that point where he follows Christ involuntarily and spontaneously, then comes the other part—liberty.

When a man has learned how to do a thing, it becomes easy for him to do it; but when he has not learned how to do it, or has forgotten how to do it, it is hard for him.

When one has been sick, he goes back to childhood, as it were, in some of his experiences. If you had had the sciatica, you would know what facility in walking means, having lost it. I remember walking from this church to my house when that friend stuck closer than a brother to me. If I failed to step just so; if, stepping over a stone, I raised one foot a little higher than the other, the pain seized me, and cut me in two as with a red-hot knife. Therefore, I was very particular to see where I put my feet every time I moved them, placing one just so, and the other just so, and all the while balancing myself very carefully. But I am well now, and I do not walk so; stones that come in my way must take care of themselves. I do not think where I put my feet. I go right and left, up and down, everywhere, and have no trouble in walking. In other words, I have subdued myself to the laws of walking.

When a man begins a trade, a profession, any vocation, and especially a Christian life, he has to look where he puts his feet; and he has his ups and downs; he meets with difficulties on every hand; but as soon as by practice he has subdued himself to the laws which belong to this new life, it is easier to him than the old life was. More and more he goes toward a large way of liberty, not by becoming so good that he is not liable to fall into evil; not because he is licensed to be wicked on account of his goodness; not because he has laid aside the law; but because, having developed through obedience to the law a tendency to do the things which the law requires, he does them better than the law could have forced him to do them. And his condition is one of liberty.

We see, then, why liberty is not dangerous. We see why it has in it the highest safety. It is the expression, not of caprice, not of willfulness, not of pride, not of waywardness: it is the expression of drilled and perfected obedience to law. There is no better expression of it in the world than that of the Psalmist: "How love I thy law!" He *loved* it. It became necessary to his very being.

A great, rude, hulking boor comes into a school kept by a slender, pale, sweet-hearted young woman; he has determined that he will have his own way, and sit where he has a mind to, and kiss the girls when he has a mind to, and spit where he has a mind to, and do every ungainly, gawky and brutal thing that he has a mind to. For a week or two there is a sad time between them; but there is that in her which awes the brute in him. There is that in her which, like the morning twilight, awakes out of his night all sweet forms of thought; and he is mad with himself, but does not know why. He finds that he does not want to do the things that he thought he would do; and he cannot tell why. At last, after a

month has gone, he watches her eye; and one beck is enough. He is moved this way or that, as she wishes. He would kiss the hem of her garment. He worships her. There is nothing that he would not do for her. Why? Because she has stirred up in his innermost soul the noblest elements that are there, and he loves her. Love is absolute despotism, and absolute liberty. And it is not dangerous; for he never was so free as since he has been under her rule. He has learned to follow her higher nature. He was the child of rude parents, and was brought up where drinking, and profanity, and all wickedness were common; and he had never before seen such a vision. After a while the sacred influence was felt, and he grew more and more toward things serene, and wise and beautiful, and was transformed thereby. And at last, when he found himself educated, and endowed with understanding, he said, "God sent his angel when I was in prison, and took me out of my darkness and bonds, and now I am a free man." Why? Because he had come to the noblest use of himself, under the highest law of his being.

Liberty is obedience to law. Therefore liberty is safe. And when a man becomes "a law unto himself," what is that but the expression of such a knowledge and such a drill in that which is designed for manhood, that he has accepted himself, and his conditions, and the laws which are obligatory upon him, and made himself so familiar with them that they act spontaneously in him, so that he does not need to read the Book, or ask the priest.

I remark, once more, that liberty develops in partialisms. It is gradually developed, and is developed on a high plane; so that men may be free in one part of their lives, and in bondage in the other parts. Men may be perfectly born to liberty in their taste, but not in their conscience. A man may be intellectually born to liberty, but not in his will. Some men are free in their lower nature, and yet in darkness in their higher. So that the work of their emancipation goes on, as it were, province by province, until the whole man becomes free in Christ Jesus. I merely state that head. I shall not illustrate it.

There is, in these expositions, light thrown upon the whole progress of religious life, as respects its usages and symbols and institutions. Men are taught that if they are Christians they ought to read the Bible. I say that just as long as a man is in an undeveloped and lower state, he ought to read his Bible. But the moment a man is developed into a true Christian liberty there is no *ought* about it. Then he is free in that matter; and he will read his Bible as much as he needs to; but he will not be obliged to read

it a bit more than he wants to. There are a great many persons who have a prison at home—their Bible; and they have to step into it every day. They have to do penance by reading the Bible morning and night; and after they have done it they feel relieved, and say, “There, I have read my chapter.” If they ever happen to forget it, it weighs on their conscience; and they say, “I declare, I was hurried, this morning, and I came to business without reading my Bible. God forgive me!”

Now, what kind of a life is that? Suppose I were living with my own son at home, where we were going through all the offices of everyday life in the same room—eating, and drinking, and working, and talking; and suppose he should get up and go out of the room without speaking to me, and should come back and say, “Father, forgive me: I did not say ‘Good morning’ when I went out!” I should open my eyes at him. I should feel insulted. If anybody loves me, he is free to speak or to be silent, as he feels inclined. If you are living on terms of perfect love and confidence with anybody, liberty is the characteristic of your relations to him, and you are not called upon to talk just so much, and at just such times.

A child sits sewing with her mother, and the mother is wrapped in thoughts that do not lead her to conversation; and the child is wrapped in her own thoughts; so they sit together the whole evening; and there do not a dozen words pass between them. And some precise, critical person says, “Great affection that, between mother and daughter! They have been sitting together nearly two hours, and they have not spoken three sentences. That is what you call *love*, is it?”

One is asked, “Did you say your prayers to-day?” No; I did not! “Great pity! You ought to have done it.” Why ought he? Do you suppose I am bound to talk to my God when I do not feel like it? Do you suppose I am under a service more exacting in my relations to my heavenly Father than a child is in his relations to his earthly parent, or than a friend is in his relations to a friend? If I am not in a mood to talk to you, you do not lose confidence in me. If I am in a mood to be taciturn, you do not blame me. And if I am not in a mood to talk with God, he understands that mood, and says to me, “Son, you are not a slave. You are not obliged to talk unless you wish to. You are my friend. Be silent; I shall understand it.”

Pray, if you feel like it; and keep silent if you do not. Do not *make believe* in the matter of praying. Do not make machinery of prayer. Let it be spontaneous. Let it be an expres-

sion of a real want in you. Many pray a hundred times too much, because they do not pray at all. There is a nation—the Tartars, I think—that have a big wheel in which they put papers with prayers written on them, and they turn the wheel round, and the wind takes these written prayers and carries them up and off. We have a twenty-four hour wheel, and as it whirls, out of one notch comes one prayer, and out of another comes another. That kind of praying is all right for them that like it. They are at liberty to have it if it is their preference. I say, however, that you are not bound to adopt that mode unless you want to. "But," it is said, "does not experience show that regularity in prayer is desirable?" It may be that it does in some cases. If your experience shows that praying by the watch does you more good than any other method, it is your liberty to pray in that way. But if another man's experience shows that he must wait for the moving of the waters, that the tides must determine when he shall pray, and when he shall not, then it is his liberty to act accordingly. I never could pray chronologically or horologically. I used to try it, but it would not do for me. How much valuable precious time have I wasted because I did not know that I was God's son, and that I was at liberty to go to my Father when I had an errand, and stay away from him when I had not; that I was free to pray if I desired to, but that otherwise I was not under obligation.

There are some men who have to promote piety by having a prayer for every hour. If any man really requires such regularity and frequency of prayer; if he is a multiplication table with the skin pulled over it, let him pray so. It is his liberty; and why do you rail at it? But if a man is made as I am, he could not do it. Nothing would extinguish the full play of my affections and of my imagination—which is my faith in God, by which I interpret him—so effectually as being compelled to observe hours and regularities. I am not regular in anything else, and how could I be in such things?

What I wish to say is, not that you are not to pray, but that you are Christ's friends—not his servants and slaves. You are not marshalled before him as soldiers are in a fort at the tap of the drum, and at the sound of a trumpet, such as I hear every morning, across the waters from Governor's Island, at five o'clock, and pity the poor wretches that it calls to duty. You are not under the drill of a military despotism. Your God stands as large as summer, and as generous. Do you suppose that the summer scolds at the flowers, and says, "Here, violets! come

forth ; ho, daffodils! why don't you come out?" Has not the plant liberty to take time to grow up from its root, and blossom? The sun smiles on the asters, and the rains wet them, though they may not choose to blossom until the very winter comes in to tip their starlike forms with early frosts. And do you suppose that nature is more free with her beauties than God is with his? I would not say anything to discourage you from reading your Bible. I think that reading the Bible is one of the most precious of privileges; and if you do not want to read it, then I think you ought to be made to read it; but if you do want to read it, then you need not.

It is in religion as it is in finance, as illustrated by the story of the Frenchman, who, fearing that he would lose his money, went to the bank where he had deposited it, and said, "I must have my money!" "All right; here it is." "Oh! if you haven't got it I must have it; but if you have got it I don't want it." It is precisely so with the knowledge of things spiritual. He that knows nothing must be taught. He that is unspiritual must be drilled. He that is undeveloped must be kept under rules. And if it be found that regular methods are best for those that are raw recruits, let them be trained according to those methods. But is there not a time when a man shall be set free from these things?

A ground is taken in respect to liturgies, and symbolisms, and church institutions, and Sabbath days, and holidays. It is your liberty to have a Sabbath every day of the week, if you find that it is good for you; but it is not your liberty to force it on anybody else. It is also your liberty to let it alone. It is your liberty to have written prayers, that not only represent the want of the present time, but that represent universal want, and that are the glorious accumulations of the experience of ages, coming down to us, and expressing, not our sighings alone, but the groanings of the whole creation ; but who shall say that it is my imperative duty to employ such prayers ?

Men say that a priest should wear white; and then that he should wear black; and then that he should wear symbols of the cross; and that he should face the east in certain things, and that he should turn his back to the congregation in other things. A man has a perfect right to turn his back to his congregation if he chooses; I think it is better in the case of many a man that he should turn his back ; but why should you take away his liberty? But when he says to me, "You must do so too," I say, "To my own Master, sir, I stand or I fall." I will not wear a robe. It is my liberty not to do it. I will not wear black nor white,

as a symbol. But do I revile symbols? No. And I would not deny them to those that want them. I am fond of symbols of certain kinds. God is the Author of my symbols. He is my officiating Helper. He is my priestly Servant. He brings in the morning full-flushed with symbols. He revolves the world, and every sound in it is symbolic to me. He spreads out the summer. He brings all the group of birds that make music through the woods and fields. And is there one of these things that has not some spiritual message for me? Is there one cloud of all those caravans that sweep through the heavens that does not teach me some lesson? Is there aught in thunder or in silence that does not bring to me some intimation of universal symbolism? What temple is like that in which I worship? Where is the palace that is for one moment to be compared to that dwelling which God has consecrated and made sacred, whither my mother has sped, to which my children have gone, and in which dear ones are hovering above me? Everything is symbolic to me.

I bring a few flowers to my platform as souvenirs of larger gardens. Sweet beloved companions are they, which come smiling and taking away sadness of spirit. You are not bound to have them on your platform, or in your house; but it is my liberty to have them here. They are not put here particularly because they are symbols of purity, or of modesty, or of anything else. This little flower, that had such a hard time to be born, I see, and that is not quite born on the top, does not symbolize anything to me. It simply smells good and looks pretty; and that is what it is here for. Some say, "It signifies grace and humility: don't you see how it bows down?" Very well, let it bow down. It is your liberty to make it signify humility to you, though it may signify nothing of the sort to me.

He who wants to worship in a Gothic cathedral, and wants a priest to say his prayers for him, and wants that priest to be clothed in certain habiliments, and wants to have service at matins and vespers, has a right to these things. There is no reason why I should say anything against them. But he must not insist upon others having them. And you must not suppose that a man who has to walk on crutches all his life is to be compared with that man who does not have to walk on crutches. If a man is so low in development that spirituality is dead in him, so that he has to prop and buttress himself up by sensuous helps, we must rank him, and say, "He is a man that is crude, as yet"—though we may not say it condemning him. A man may say, "It is easier for me to worship so and so." Yes, it is easier for you; and therefore it is

right for you. A man says, "I worship better in this way." Very well, if you worship better that way, worship in that way.

I go out with a friend to look at a landscape; and I say to him, "Is it not beautiful—that slope, that vale, those rugged hills, and that silver river?" He puts on his spectacles, and begins to look. I look with open eyes, and see the landscape unobstructed: he looks, and sees it through his spectacles. What is the difference between us? My eyes are better than his. I say, "You have to look through glasses, and that is all right; but, so far, your eyes are imperfect."

When a man looks at God through symbols of worship, and I look at him without the help of symbols, he is near-sighted, and I am long-sighted. If you tell me that it is apostolicity on your side, I say that it is God on mine; and I will pit God against the apostles, the whole of them. Do not be in bondage. Do not fear to help yourself by symbols. If your nature, if your disposition, if the development of your religious life, leads you to this or that form of worship, accept it; only, he who knows how to worship God as a Spirit, in spirit and in truth, certainly stands higher and stronger, and more perfectly developed, than he who has to worship God through the help of various symbols. Symbols are for youth. They are for the uncultured. They are for those who yet depend on their senses. They are for those who are low in the scale of faith. They are beneficent and blessed, oftentimes, to those who are in such a state that they need such things to aid them in worship.

I have sat in village Episcopal churches in England, and had an unusual access of faith, and love, and hope, through symbols. They were more powerful to me than to those who commonly worshiped there, because they were new to me; because they came to me but once in the course of five or ten years, and came as though they dropped out of heaven; while to them they came every day, and therefore could not have that novelty to them that they had to me.

I do not condemn these things; I do not dissuade you from them; I commend them to you as useful under some circumstances; but they are rounds of a ladder; they are stairs—do not sit down on them. Use them; but every time you put your foot on one, remember that it is only a means by which you are to step up to the next, and that you are to go on higher and higher, until you have ascended to the chamber which you seek. Here are these symbolic ladders, and there are men roosting on them all the way from the bottom to the top. There are men that accept a ritualistic

worship, and couch down on it, and will not go on ; and you shall find many to-day just where they were twenty years ago.

Now, you are called to liberty. These things are to help you in your education. They are to enlarge you. They are to give you wider scope. If they narrow you, if they circumscribe your sphere, if they keep you in the same spot, then to you they are not instruments of liberty, but instruments of bondage.

I will not pursue this subject further. I wish only, in closing, to call your attention to how much the power of true religion is diminished, in that the liberty of religion is so little understood. The largeness which belongs to Christian manhood, the freedom of it, its elasticity, and the variety which there should be in it, men are sadly ignorant of.

There is not a thing in you that God did not put there on purpose. There is not a wheel in your make-up that has not a right to revolve. Every part of your being is a servant of God. Therefore there is not a part of himself that a Christian man should not develop. The apostle prays that "your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless." Grace, strength, skill, and beauty belong to you, and ought to be used by you as a Christian, for the cause of your Master. Your passions and appetites, all your lower natural propensities, are right in their place ; but your affections and moral sentiments are to blossom, and are to manifest themselves in poetry, and oratory, and music, and in every sphere of life.

"The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof ;" and the Lord is my Father ; and as all things belong to him, I own everything that is above me and beneath me ; and I have a right to the largest personal liberty ; and no priest nor anybody else has any right to stand up and say to me, "Why do you not do so and so ?" To my own Master I stand or fall.

But my liberty must be a liberty that exercises itself in the sphere of divine love. It must be an expression of all that is in me ; but it must be such an expression, it must be an expression so large, so glad, and so joyous, it must be an expression so noble and so enduring that there shall not be any doubt about its rightfulness.

There is much talk as to whether the Bible is inspired. What I want to see is inspired *men*. Men are talking about the evidences of Christianity. Ye are the epistles, if there are any. There cannot be an argument for a dead Christianity, and there need not be one. If there is a live Christianity, show me the man that wants to doubt it. Do you make yourself a friend to the

poor, ministering to their wants? Nobody wants to doubt that. Do you love even when you are hated? Nobody wants to deny that. Are you, with all long-suffering patience and kindness, doing good to them that despitefully use you and persecute you? Nobody wants to doubt that, if it be so. Living, abiding Christian benevolence is not a thing for debate. There are some things that appeal, not to the reason, but to the emotions. You might write ever so much about music, and not be understood nor believed; but let Mr. Zundel play an inspiring strain of music on the instrument, and you will not doubt its power to affect the soul. It carries conviction in itself. It has intrinsic merits which cannot but be recognized.

We are never going to make head against skepticism except by giving to human life such a development that all men shall see that there is no other idea of manhood comparable to it—and such a development will be the victory, the triumph of the cross of Christ.

Oh, that we had such lives as that!—and in some measure we have. Do not you know that when you go to teach, it is not the open Book, but you, that is the Gospel to your pupils. The printer made the Bible, but God made you. That is ink and paper—that is the letter; but the Spirit is in you. The letter killeth; but the spirit maketh alive. If you be kind, and patient, and considerate, and unfailing in gentleness and devotion toward those who cannot repay you, then men will understand what you mean when you say that Christ “gave his life a ransom for many;” and out of you they will learn what it is to look up and adore a Saviour who is “God over all, blessed forever.”

Oh, that we might rise into this large liberty of an educated and perfect obedience—into this “glorious light and liberty of the sons of God,” who by love have been perfected in the things which are pleasing to God, and best for men!

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#### PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

OUR Father, we have reason to thank thee for thy great condescension, and for that bounty which thou art granting unto us through the ministration of thy laws, by day and by night, in summer and in winter, in storms and in calms, by rudeness and by gentleness, by prosperity and by adversity. By all influences thou art plying our many-sided natures, knocking at the door of our souls, and seeking to enter in. Thou art, O Lord our God, gracious unto us. A Teacher and a Father art thou. More bountiful, more patient, more long-suffering, more kind, and more loving than earthly parents know how to be to their children, is our God to us. For all that thou art, as revealed to us by what thou art doing, we rejoice, and render

thee thanks. We thank thee for those hours in which by faith we have glimpses of thee, so that heaven is bright, and the earth is bright, and hope is elate. We rejoice that even in darkness we have a confidence that, like an anchor in the storm, holds us steadfast, till the waves subside, and the clouds are cleared away. We rejoice in thy presence. We rejoice that we are permitted to commune with thee. We rejoice that in our solitary hours thou dost meet us in thy Word. As one walks in a garden, and enjoys its sweet fragrance, and is surrounded by all the amplitude of its stores, so we walk in thy Word, and take pleasure in all its sweet delights. We rejoice to find thee there so often, though sometimes we see thee and know thee not, and think it is the gardener and that thou art gone.

O Lord, we thank thee for all the ministration of thy mercy to us in our homes; in our closets; in our solitary walks and meditations; in the strife of business; in perplexities; in labors in overmeasure; in difficulties; in sadness. We thank thee for thy presence in joy and in sorrow; in fullness and in barrenness; in hours when we are uplifted, and in hours when we are cast down; when we are on the mount of transfiguration, and when we are at the base of the mountain where demoniac spirits rage.

We rejoice that thou art all to all, and in all. We rejoice that every want seeks thee, and that every pain calls out to thee. We rejoice that even our unconscious yearnings and breathings are movings of thy Spirit in us.

And now, Father, we do not know the way. We believe that thou art the way; but we do not understand thee perfectly. Yet we do know enough of thee to feel the yearnings and drawings of thy heart. We are taught of thee. We cannot pluck ourselves away from thee if we would. We rejoice in thee, and pray that we may be bound still more closely to thee, and that we may feel the inspiration of thy presence, and that we may, with all the power of imagination, gather up those things which are brightest, most beautiful, and most to be desired—all that is glorious in excellence, and that the testimony of mankind hath shown to be best in man. May we bring around about us, and clothe ourselves in, and rejoice over, those elements which are allied to thy nature. Interpret thyself to us by the shining of the sweet Spirit. By the light of the sun thou makest all things to appear. Without that light we should not know one thing from another. What things are pure, and what things are delicate, and what things are bright, and what things are beautiful, we can know, not by our feeling, but only by the shining of the sun. And we pray that thou wilt so shine into us that we may rejoice in the knowledge of God, and in our communion with thee.

We pray that thou wilt accept the thanks of those that are gathered together to-day, conscious of thy great mercy to them. Some have come because they are recipients of thy bounty; some, because they have new-found love; some, because they are objects of sparing mercy; some, because children have come back to them that seemed lost; some, because those who have been separated are reunited; some, because death hath fled away; some, because they have survived a stormy voyage; some, because they have heard tidings from afar of God's great goodness to those whom they love; some, because thou hast delivered them from the hand of violence; some, because thou hast taken fear away; some, because remorse has gone. O Lord, look upon the many-sided joy and gratitude of thy servants, and help them to speak their emotions in thine ear, and feel the rebound of thy heart throb toward them.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt draw near to those who are in sorrow, and would speak to thee. If they sigh, be thou in their sighing. If they are sad, be thou in their sadness. Be gentle with them, as thou didst teach thy

disciples to be with each other, and with those whom they were sent to instruct. Bear with them in their struggles, and be merciful to them in their unmeasured griefs.

We pray that thou wilt be with those who sit in the shadow of darkness to-day. Wilt thou make them feel that they are not alone? Though there may not be one to whom they may speak; though they may not be able to speak even to those who are nearest and dearest to them what they think and feel, let their hearts lie open before thee. And may they be comforted. May the light of thy countenance bring sweet tranquility to their souls. And though they know not why, may they rest to-day in the Lord.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt be with those who ask thy help in bearing the burdens of life; in discriminating between right and wrong; in determining what is duty; in struggling for the fulfillment of painful duties.

Help, we pray thee, those who are screening themselves from their adversaries. Help those who are tempted more than they can bear. Help all those who are in battle, and know not when the stroke may fall upon them.

Grant, we beseech of thee, that every one may put on the whole armor of God and be valiant, and patient, and, having done all, stand.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt clothe thy people with more and more of thy free Spirit. Help them to go forth more lordly, since they are sons of God. Everywhere may they have victory over evil, and more and more be fortified in truth and goodness.

We pray for thy blessing to rest upon all those who are kept from us to-day, upon those whose thoughts turn toward the sanctuary, but who, by sickness, by watching with the sick, or by troubles, are kept at home. May their home not be dark. As there is light from the altar to thy throne, so may there be light from the sanctuary of their houses to thy heart. Visit them; and may there be a Gospel for them, even if it descend silently. As through the air the dews descend and fall upon flowers, so may thy blessing come to them to-day.

We pray that thou wilt bless our dear brethren that have worshiped with us who are far away. Bless those who preach the Gospel of Christ in every language, and under every phase. Bless all who everywhere seek to instruct their fellow-men.

Bless our own schools, and those who teach in them, and those that are taught. More and more may the hearts of this people be turned toward those who are less favored than themselves. May they carry peace, and purity, and love to those who are lacking. We pray that they may become teachers and benefactors to all who are around about them.

We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the cause of God in every form. We pray for the world—not for the round terraqueous globe, but for thy dear creatures that are on it. Look upon those nations that sit in darkness; look upon barbarous and savage nations; look upon those nations where the truth has not yet shone; and also upon those Christian nations that are so unchristian.

We pray that wars and revolutions and oppressions may cease, and that all growths which carry blessings with them may take place, by the permissions of men, little by little, until thou shalt have consummated thy plan, whatever it may be, in the ages which are to come, and until the whole earth shall be brought up into victorious perfection.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son and Spirit. *Amen.*

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